



MEMORANDUM

TO: Montgomery County Planning Board *M Bradford*

VIA: Mary Bradford, Director of Parks *MR*
Mike Riley, Deputy Director of Parks for Administration *J Hench*
John Hench, Chief, Park Planning and Stewardship Division *DKH*
Dan Hardy, Chief, Transportation Planning Division, Department of Planning

FROM: Brooke Farquhar, Acting Supervisor, Park and Trail Planning, Park Planning *Brooke Farquhar*
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DATE: November 10, 2008

RE: **Little Bennett Regional Park Master Plan Bike Paths: Discussion**

Introduction

On September 15, 2008, Park Planning Staff presented the *Little Bennett Regional Park Master Plan* to the Planning, Housing and Economic Development (PHED) Committee of the Montgomery County Council. At the session, the Montgomery County Department of Transportation raised an issue of master plan consistency regarding bike paths and trails. Specifically, Department of Transportation questions the status of two bike paths, B-1 and B-6 (*Figure 1*), recommended in the *Clarksburg Master Plan (1994)*; neither of these bike paths are included in the *Little Bennett Regional Park Master Plan (Figure 2)*.

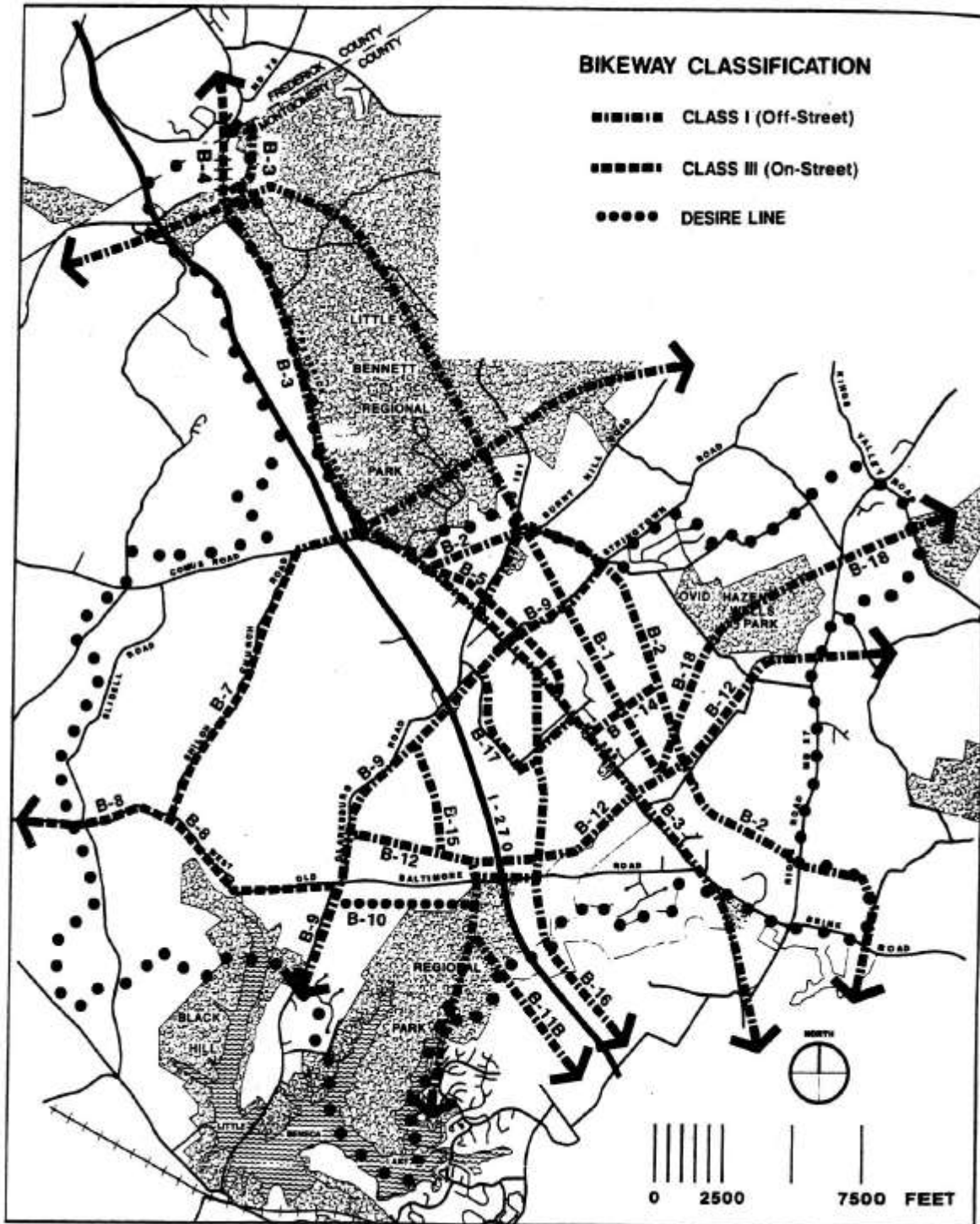
This issue was previously raised by Department of Transportation and addressed during the Planning Board's final public worksession on, and approval of, the *Little Bennett Regional Park Master Plan* in May 2007. The PHED Committee has asked for further clarification of the Board's position on the issue.

In advance of the PHED Committee's upcoming review on December 8, 2008, today's discussion will focus on the recommendations regarding bike paths and related trails in the *Little Bennett Regional Park Master Plan*, approved by the Board in May 2007. Council staff member, Marlene Michaelson, asked Park and Planning Staff to demonstrate the following in our response to the Department of Transportation when briefing the PHED Committee:

Figure 1: Bikeway Plan for the Clarksburg Master Plan and Hyattstown Special Study Area (June 1994)

Bikeway Plan

Figure 43



Clarksburg Master Plan and Hyattstown Special Study Area
 APPROVED AND ADOPTED JUNE 1994

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1. That the deletion of bike paths B-1 and B-6 was intentional in Master Plans adopted after the *Clarksburg Master Plan*.
2. That the transportation purpose of the deleted bike paths, B-1 and B-6, is adequately fulfilled in subsequent adopted Master Plans.

Summary of Department of Transportation Concerns

The Department of Transportation believes there are “inconsistencies between the Draft Little Bennett Regional Park Master Plan and other current approved and adopted master plans”, particularly concerning two bike paths (B-1 and B-6) that were shown through the middle of the park in the *Clarksburg Master Plan* (Figure 1). See Attachment A, Department of Transportation’s testimony at the PHED Committee’s September 15, 2008 meeting, as well as Attachment B, a letter from Lynne Rosenbusch dated October 2, 2008 supporting DOT’s testimony.

The Department of Transportation does not believe the relocation or deletion of the two bike paths, as now reflected in the *Little Bennett Regional Park Master Plan*, was appropriately conveyed in master plan documents approved by the County Council subsequent to the 1994 *Clarksburg Plan*.

In addition, the Department of Transportation requests that any reference to a future Corridor Cities Transitway be deleted from the *Little Bennett Regional Park Master Plan* (Figure 2).

Staff Response - Bike Paths

The *Countywide Bikeways Functional Master Plan* (2005) and the *Damascus Master Plan* (2006), both of which were approved after the *Clarksburg Master Plan*, amended the *Clarksburg Master Plan*. Neither Plan shows bike paths passing through Little Bennett Regional Park (bike paths B-1 and B-6). The *Countywide Bikeways Functional Master Plan* depicts instead a hard surface park trail corridor, not a bike path, passing through the southernmost portion of the park (Figure 3). This trail represents the modified alignment for bike path B-1 in the *Clarksburg Master Plan* and changes the facility classification from bike path to park trail.

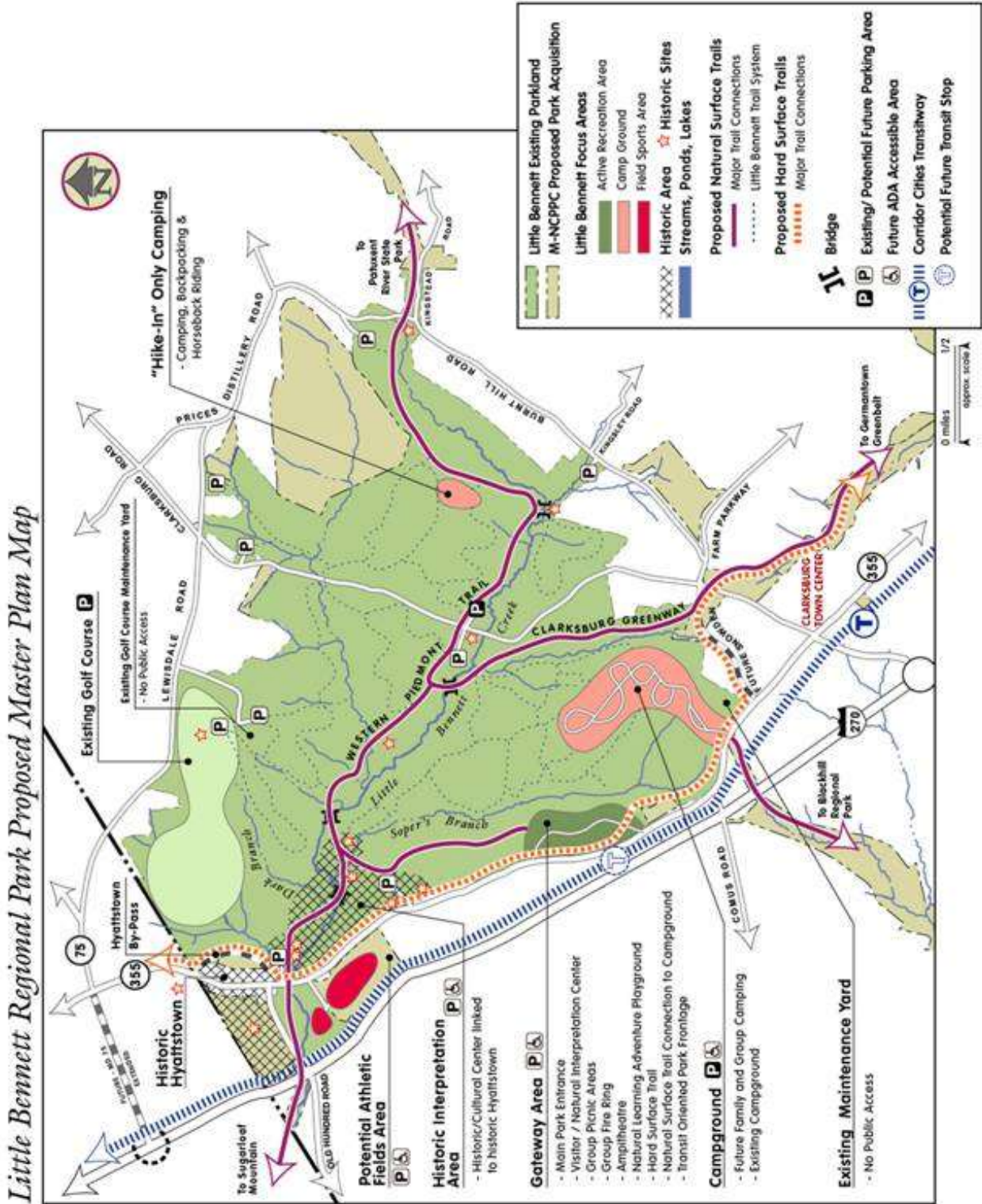
The *Countywide Bikeways Functional Master Plan* recommends bike paths along Snowden Farm Parkway / Midcounty Highway and Frederick Road (bike paths B-2 and B-3 in the *Clarksburg Master Plan*).

Changes to bike paths and hard surface trails in the *Countywide Bikeways Functional Master Plan* involved close coordination between cycling advocates, environmental advocates, park staff and transportation staff during development of the plan. The east-west bike path through the park, shown as bike path B-6 in the *Clarksburg Master Plan*, would be a bike path of countywide significance. Its absence from the *Countywide Bikeways Functional Master Plan* deletes it from all future county master plans.

The *Damascus Master Plan* is consistent with the *Countywide Bikeways Functional Master Plan* guidance removing hard surface trails in the park. It does not show any hard surface trails passing through Little Bennett Regional Park, i.e., bike path B-6. In fact, the *Damascus Master Plan* depicts a natural surface trail network, consistent with the current vision for the park.

Park and Planning staff disagrees with the Department of Transportation that the *Little Bennett Regional Park Master Plan* fails to address prior master plan intent and guidance. The *Clarksburg Master Plan* explicitly acknowledges that the master plan for Little Bennett Regional Park “... will guide future development” of the park (Page 159). The *Clarksburg Master Plan Implementation Study* intentionally located the hard surface trail parallel to MD 355, with only natural surface trails in the park’s interior. The plan also states “Add greenway trail planning as a critical element in the *Little Bennett Regional Park Master Plan*.” (Page 33)

Figure 2: Little Bennett Regional Park Master Plan Map



The *Countywide Bikeways Functional Master Plan* Master Plan identifies only one trail traversing the park and it is defined as a “park trail corridor”, not a bike path. The Plan shows that the bike path along MD 355 provides the bike path transportation purpose by providing “... excellent connection to ... Clarksburg Town Center.” (Page 61)

Staff finds the deletion of bike paths B-1 and B-6 from all plans subsequent to the *Clarksburg Master Plan* was intentional as illustrated by the maps contained in each master plan, although not explicitly addressed in the text. The *Countywide Bikeways Functional Master Plan* and the *Damascus Master Plan* intentionally designated the trails in question to be park trail corridors rather than bike paths. Since park trails are not the subject of direct Council review and adoption, the alignment of them is subject to Planning Board approval only, through the Park Master Plan process. Bike paths that provide transportation system connectivity along public rights-of-way are the subject of Council review and adoption of area or functional master plans.

Conclusion

In summary, Park and Planning Staff continue to support the position first presented to the Board in its review and approval of the *Little Bennett Regional Park Master Plan* in May 2007 that any inconsistency between the *Clarksburg Master Plan* and subsequent adopted Master Plans was intentional.

Staff also believes the transportation function formerly associated with the bike path B-1 in the *Clarksburg Master Plan* is fulfilled by bike path SP-72, formerly referred to as bike path B-3 (see figure 3) . Bike path B-6 was considered not needed and was therefore not included in the *Countywide Bikeways Functional Master Plan* or the *Damascus Master Plan*.

Staff finds no amendment to the *Little Bennett Regional Park Master Plan*, the *Damascus Master Plan*, *Clarksburg Implementation Study* or the *Countywide Bikeways Functional Master Plan* are needed at this time.

Staff Response – Corridor Cities Transitway Station

The *Little Bennett Regional Park Master Plan* identifies a “potential future Corridor Cities Transitway station” in the vicinity of the park’s day use area. The current Maryland Department of Transportation study of the Corridor Cities Transitway extends only between Shady Grove and the COMSAT site south of the Clarksburg Town Center. The portion of the Corridor Cities Transitway adjacent to Little Bennett Regional Park will likely not be studied in the foreseeable future. At such time as the Corridor Cities Transitway is studied in this vicinity, the Little Bennett Regional Park Master Plan will be one of the elements that informs the Corridor Cities Transitway study scope.

The expense and maintenance of a full-time Corridor Cities Transitway station to serve Little Bennett Regional Park is likely not warranted. Yet transit connections between the Corridor Cities Transitway and park have merit, and the potential for future transit access to the selected Corridor Cities Transitway mode (bus or rail) adjacent to the park entrance should be considered, even if only for special event purposes. Access by high-quality transit, including shuttle services from the Clarksburg Town Center or the COMSAT site to LBRP should be pursued during *Little Bennett Regional Park Master Plan* implementation.

Conclusion

Staff finds no amendment to the *Little Bennett Regional Park Master Plan* or Area Master Plans are needed at this time.

Figure 3 - The Countywide Bikeway Functional Master Plan Figure 2-15

